

Linda W. Murphy
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March 4, 2021

Members of the Judiciary Committee
Connecticut House of Representatives
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: In Support of H.B. 6355

Dear Chairs and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in support of H.B. 6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders or Warrants. I support this bill because modernizing our current red flag law is a common-sense measure that can save lives.

I am proud that Connecticut was one of the first states to enact a risk warrant law in 1999; that allows law enforcement to intervene and to remove firearms from individuals who they believe are at risk of harming themselves or others. H.B. 6355 seeks to amend and modernize the law that already exists in Connecticut. Most notably, the revision allows family and household members to directly petition the court to issue an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO). Currently, only law enforcement officials can do this, and only after conducting an independent investigation. Family members of people in crisis are often the first to recognize dangerous warning signs, but are denied direct access to the red flag process because they are unable to directly request an order from the court. This denies them the chance to utilize ERPO, a life-saving tool. An ERPO is designed to intervene during a crisis, when time is of the essence. Eliminating the middleman and allowing family members to approach the courts themselves will save precious time.

The involvement of law enforcement is an issue of significance for communities in which residents may not feel comfortable approaching the police. An amended red flag law gives them a chance to go directly to the court and translates into lives saved. In addition, in the case of a potential suicide, some might believe that this is private, and not a matter in which to involve law enforcement. The revision to the existing risk warrant law would empower family members to temporarily remove guns from loved ones who could be a risk to themselves.

Connecticut set an example for the nation when it passed one of the first red flag laws, but we must now modernize the bill to include family and household members as petitioners. The law as written is already making a difference. One study, "Effects of Risk-Based Firearm Seizure Laws in Connecticut and Indiana on Suicide Rates, 1981–2015, rate," showed it to be associated with a 14% reduction in the state's firearm suicide. HB 6355 gives the law the potential to do even more.

Please support H.B. 6355. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda W. Murphy

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